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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

PA Elections

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio reported that Hamas has apparently won the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections, gaining 70 of the council's 130 seats, and that it is likely to be able to form a government. The radio quoted Hamas spokesmen as saying that the organization won 46 to 48 percent of the votes in the regions, and over 40 percent in the all-PA ballots. The Israeli electronic media and major news web sites cited Palestinian PM Ahmed Qurei's office as saying this morning that Palestinian Cabinet members submitted their resignations today following Hamas's apparent victory. Israel Radio quoted Qurei as saying that the resignation was meant to allow Hamas to assemble the next Palestinian government. Israel Radio quoted GOI sources in Jerusalem as saying that Israel will not hold talks with a Hamas-dominated government, and that it will not have ties with it. The web sites of Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that Acting PM Ehud Olmert will convene a special meeting with defense chiefs this evening to discuss Hamas's apparent victory. The station quoted Vice Premier Shimon Peres as saying that Hamas will have to deal with the termination of international aid to the Palestinians. Leading media reported that Israeli conservatives on the right are blaming last summer's disengagement for the Hamas victory and criticized the decision to allow Hamas to participate in the elections. Ha'aretz's web site quoted Labor Party Chairman Amir Peretz as saying that his party does not consider the Islamic group to be a partner for peace negotiations.

All media (banners in all dailies, except Yediot and Maariv) had reported that Fatah probably won the PLC elections with a slight edge over Hamas, depending on the findings of exit polls. The turnout was close to 80 percent. Israel Radio reported that the election results will be published today. The radio quoted Olmert as saying on Wednesday during a meeting with U.S. Senator Joe Biden (D-DE) that he will be happy to meet with PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas to discuss the Roadmap and Abbas's commitment to disarm Palestinian terrorist organizations, principally Hamas. The station further quoted Olmert as saying that Israel will not accept a situation in which Hamas, which calls for Israel's destruction, will be part of the PA and will not be disarmed. Israel Radio reported that Abbas called on the international community to assist in the resumption of talks between Israel and the Palestinians. The radio quoted Abbas as saying that this is the beginning of a new era and that the PA needs the assistance of the world's countries to return the parties to the negotiating table and reach a peace agreement. The station quoted President Bush as saying he would not deal with Hamas unless it renounced seeking Israel's destruction. Israel Radio quoted State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack as saying: "It's a great day for the Palestinian people. This is

a historic moment for them.... Turnout has been high. And this should be a day for celebration for the Palestinian people. They are able to express their views and express their will through the ballot box." The radio noted that McCormack would not comment further on his statement. Israel Radio also quoted him as saying: "The Quartet has made it very clear that the Palestinian cabinet should not include any member who does not recognize Israel's right to exist or has not renounced violence."

Yediot reported that newly appointed FM Tzipi Livni will hold three important diplomatic meetings over the next several weeks: with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The daily wrote that the Livni-Rice meeting will take place on February 7, and that the Secretary invited Livni to talk with her about the ramifications of the Palestinian parliamentary elections.

Ha'aretz reported that Olmert will soon present for government approval two changes to the route of the separation fence: removing the Palestinian village Beit Iksha, near the western entrance to Jerusalem, from the "Israeli" side of the fence, and splitting the route in the area encompassing Ariel.

Yediot reported that the IDF presented Defense Ministry Shaul Mofaz with a document detailing the uprooting of 780 Palestinian olive trees over a six-month period. The newspaper wrote that the document indicates that residents of the Scali Farm were behind the deeds. Yediot reported that Mofaz subsequently ordered the evacuation of the settler outpost.

Both Yediot and Maariv led with what they say is the list of Kadima candidates for the Knesset. Both newspapers wrote that the first candidates on the list are (in descending order) Ehud Olmert, Tzipi Livni, Meir Sheerit, and Avi Dichter. While Yediot reported that the candidates in the sixth to the tenth spot are Haim Ramon, Shaul Mofaz, Uriel Reichman, Tzachi Hanegbi, and Marina Solodkin, Maariv said that Marina Solodkin, Haim Ramon, Shaul Mofaz, Tzachi Hanegbi, and Abraham Hirschson fill those spots.

Major media reported that PM Sharon could be admitted to the Loewenstein Hospital Rehabilitation Center in Raanana. Leading media cited a Loewenstein Center statement on its web site that close to 86 percent of comatose patients in its neurological intensive care unit have recovered consciousness -- a figure it describes as one of the highest in the world.

Based on news agencies, Ha'aretz, Yediot, and The Jerusalem Post quoted Iran's Defense Minister, Gen. Mostafa Mohammed Najjar, as saying, in a statement read on Iranian state television on Wednesday, that, were Israel to attack Iran's nuclear facilities, Iran would respond so strongly that it would put the Jewish state into an "eternal coma." Maariv reported that among the many correspondents who covered the PLC elections was a representative of the Iranian state channel el-Alam (the world), which reported by means of satellite to Tehran.

Yediot (Ronen Bergman) reported that the Mossad missed an opportunity to kill Osama bin Laden five years ago, before the 9/11 attacks. The newspaper said that in the 1990s, the Israeli intelligence agency recruited a female confidante of bin Laden who was supposed to kill him. However, the newspaper said that due to a crisis between Israel and the PA, the intelligence services of the country in which the assassination was supposed to take place stopped cooperating with Israel. When the cooperation resumed, bin Laden had moved to another country and the operation was aborted.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Harvard Law School Prof. Alan Dershowitz as saying at a Bar-Ilan University conference on press freedom that anti-Israel boycotts encourage terror.

Globes (banner) and Yediot reported that New York State Governor George Pataki surreptitiously introduced in his state's budget a clause that would allow New York State's Division of Housing and Community Renewal to finance projects at Jerusalem's Hadassah University Hospital, Ein Karem, through an issuance of bonds. The newspapers reported that Pataki's initiative sparked uproar in New York State.

Ha'aretz reported that in a special cabinet meeting to be held today at the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum, the government will approve plans to request responsibility

over the Jewish pavilion at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum in Poland.

Ha'aretz cited the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ) as saying on Wednesday that devout Christians have increased their contributions to Israel and Diaspora Jewry by 30 percent last year, while contributions of Jews throughout the world continue to dwindle. The newspaper cited that IFCJ as saying that Christians contributed 130 million shekels (around USD 28 million) in 2005.

Ha'aretz reported that the American "investment boutique" Discipline Partners, which manages a portfolio worth USD 500 million, wants to interest Israeli financial agencies in joint ventures.

Maariv reported that the leading Hollywood-based literary and talent agency CAA has decided to employ Liron Petrosil, who was the secretary of Danny Ayalon, Israel's Ambassador to the U.S. The newspaper noted that Judy Shalom-Nir-Mozes, the wife of former FM Silvan Shalom, had demanded that he be dismissed over the fact that he did not arrange a meeting between her and the American singer Madonna.

A TNS/Teleseker Polling Institute survey published by Maariv found that the Left (Labor Party and Meretz) is gaining three Knesset seats:
- "Were elections for the Knesset held today, for whom would you vote?" (Results in Knesset seats -- in brackets, results of previous poll.)
- Kadima 41 (43); Labor Party 22 (20); Likud 13 (14); Shas 10 (11); Arab parties 8 (7); Meretz 6 (5); National Union 6 (6); United Torah Judaism 5 (6); Yisrael Beiteinu 5 (5); National Religious Party 4 (3).

Channel 10-TV and Ha'aretz published the results of a survey conducted on Wednesday by Prof. Camille Fuchs of the Amanet Group's Dialogue Institute:
- Kadima would win 44 Knesset seats (41 in a poll taken one week ago); the Labor Party would garner 21 seats (up from 19); and Likud gain 14 seats (down from 17).

PA Elections:

Summary: -----

Veteran columnist Yaron London wrote in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "If Hamas is in control, Palestinian democracy will be cut down in its youth.... There are no peaceful years ahead of us."

Arab affairs commentator Danny Rubinstein wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Even before polling ended in Wednesday's parliamentary elections, it was clear that after almost 40 years, Fatah was nearing the end of its monopoly in running the affairs of the Palestinian Authority."

Block Quotes: -----

I. "The Palestinians Vote"

Veteran columnist Yaron London wrote in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (January 26): "As I write these lines, our Palestinian neighbors are electing the representatives for their legislature.... There have never been freer elections than these in the entire Arab world, except for Lebanon. This fact underscores the rebuttal to the theory that free elections in Arab societies lacking a democratic tradition strengthen those organizations that advocate an Islamic theocracy. If Hamas is in control, Palestinian democracy will be cut down in its youth.... Only a few believe that Mahmoud Abbas will manage to keep his promise to disarm the rival organization, and so we will face a powerless Palestinian government, where half of the members are agents of an armed fanatic militia. If that happens, the chances of making progress on the road map will fade, and very soon Israel will be forced to recognize the fact that there is no hope for a peace agreement any time soon and for dividing the land through consent. Because the demographic clock is working against the Jews, and because the occupation erodes our resilience, the government of Israel, whatever its composition, may have to stabilize a temporary border whose route is already agreed on by a majority of the public. In the past we evaded making decisions on the pretext that there was nobody to talk to and now we've

decided to decide, whether there is somebody to talk to or not. This leads to the conclusion that topping the public agenda in the coming years will still be the issues that have been tormenting us for a long time: shaping the country's borders, an act that entails forcibly uprooting tens of thousands of Jews living in the occupied territories. There are no peaceful years ahead of us."

II. "A Milestone For Palestinian Politics"

Arab affairs commentator Danny Rubinstein wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (January 26): "Even before polling ended in Wednesday's parliamentary elections, it was clear that after almost 40 years, Fatah was nearing the end of its monopoly in running the affairs of the Palestinian Authority.... Is a partnership between the Fatah and Hamas possible? Judging by Palestinian leaders from all factions, neither has much choice. The alternative is chaos and civil war.... Hamas spokesmen made efforts Wednesday to blur their positions when asked about the various possibilities [of election results]. Some said they would be ready to negotiate with Israel; others dismissed it. They were evasive and spoke of assuming roles in the new Palestinian government that would not require contact with Israel. They gave contradictory replies about taking part in a national unity government. Either way, there is no doubt that yesterday's elections constitute an extremely important milestone in the Palestinians' political life."

JONES